AGENDA ITEM III C 2

PROPOSED ACADEMIC PROGRAM

LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE/B.S. IN ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Louisiana law requires that persons who wish to sit for the licensure exam as a professional architect in this state must have completed a first-professional degree in the discipline and undergo a period of apprenticeship. For many years, four public universities (ULL, LSU, La Tech, and SUBR) each offered a Bachelor of Architecture program (B. Arch.). Each of these programs were structured as a first-professional degree.

In 1985, the Board of Regents approved a new M.S. program in Architecture for LSU; this degree was to be a graduate program of study beyond the first-professional degree; LSU would continue to offer a first-professional baccalaureate program. In 1999, the Regents approved a subsequent request from LSU to restructure its M.S. program into a Master of Architecture (M. Arch.). The restructured degree was designed to serve two functions: (a) as a first-professional degree for students who already possessed an undergraduate degree in another discipline or significant previous work experience in the discipline of closely-related area ; and/or (b) as a graduate degree for students who already possessed an undergraduate degree in Architecture.

In 2001, the Board of Regents approved a request from ULL to reconfiguration its B. Arch. program into a M. Arch.. Unlike the M.Arch. at LSU, however, ULL's degree *replaced* its baccalaureate degree as the University's first-professional program in Architecture. In addition, the Regents also approved a pre-professional B.S. program in Architectural Studies at ULL which contained the first four years of professional study. The proposal from La Tech which this staff summary considers requests the same action that was taken for ULL.

TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM DESIGN

Some observations about recent trends in the design of first-professional degrees in Architecture are relevant:

    1.   First-professional degrees in Architecture are abnormally long (156-172 hours), as compared to most other baccalaureate degree programs (120-132 hours), and usually take a minimum of five years to complete. The profession (the American Institute of Architects - AIA), the architecture program accrediting body (the National Architecture Accrediting Board - NAAB), and academia have long

agreed that it is extremely difficult for both students and schools to accommodate this lengthy period of study with a baccalaureate degree, but there has been little willingness on the part of either AIA or NAAB to reduce the number of courses/hours required, given the breadth of knowledge expected for professional practice.

2.   In an effort to rectify this dilemma, both the AIA and the NAAB have over the past several years encouraged states and universities to move to a Five-Year Master of Architecture program as the first-professional degree.   In fact, the NAAB has placed a moratorium of approval of candidacy of any new B.Arch programs after 2010. In addition, some states have passed legislation requiring the M. Arch. as the minimum educational requirement for architects. Accordingly, a significant number of universities have upgraded their undergraduate programs in Architecture to the Masters level. While some universities continue to offer a five-year, first-professional baccalaureate programs, but it is generally agreed that this degree format has a limited future.

3.   There are a few curricular variations to that described above, but for the purposes of this discussion, these exceptions are not relevant.

REVIEW OF LA TECH'S PROPOSAL

To guarantee that La Tech 's proposal passes both professional and academic muster, the staff decided to hire an external consultant to conduct an in-depth review. This consultant, Mr. William Galloway, Chair of the Graduate Programs in Architecture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, was particularly well-suited to the task which the staff presented him as his institution offers fully accredited M. Arch. and M.S. in Architecture programs. The section which follows juxtaposes recommendations and comments made by Mr. Galloway in his report with responses from La Tech.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS OF THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT

Report:

The School of Architecture at Louisiana Tech University provides a valuable and needed service to the citizens of the State of Louisiana and the surrounding region by educating future design professionals. The School is well-regarded, and it is establishing a sound reputation as a place that values the art and craft of building. The architecture program's specific identity is well articulated in its mission:

> "To provide a comprehensive and uncompromising, balanced and demanding education in the art (poetic expression), craft (technical processes) and practice (professional services) of ethical building through the polytechnic tradition of 'hands-on' experiences and empirical learning that prepares an individual to be an architect in the fullest sense of the term."

Since 1978-79, the existing B.Arch. program at Louisiana Tech has been continuously accredited by the NAAB. The program received a full term of accreditation (historically a maximum 5-year term) during its most recent NAAB team visit in 2000.4 Architectural accreditation is an extremely rigorous and demanding process, involving a comprehensive review of the program's structure, policies, courses, faculty, facilities, and financial and information resources. That the previous accreditation team found only one deficiency speaks well of the architecture program and its conformance with established standards for professional architectural education.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT, WITH RESPONSES FROM LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

Curricular Expansion/Additional Opportunities for Elective Study Are Needed

Report:

The combined quantity of required general education and elective credits also appears to be within the NAAB guidelines. However, the 2004 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation state, "A professional degree program must allow students to pursue their special interests. The curriculum must be flexible enough to allow students to complete minors or develop areas of concentration, inside or outside the program." Compared to the existing B.Arch. curriculum, elective opportunities appear to have been reduced in the proposed curriculum: only 8% of the overall required number of credits will be in electives, minimally adequate to comply with the NAAB requirement. The School of Architecture should explore providing additional opportunities for elective study, and new advanced elective courses should perhaps be developed to allow students to define areas of concentration, especially within the graduate portion of the proposed curriculum.

The proposed revised curriculum (BS in Arch. Studies and M.Arch.) would require the completion of at least 153 total combined semester credit hours. However, this falls short of the 168 semester credit hours required for a professional Master of Architecture degree by the latest version of the NAAB Conditions for Accreditation.5 Although the 2004 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation allow existing programs a period of approx. ten years (until 2015) to conform to the new minimum credit hour requirements, in my opinion, the School of Architecture at Louisiana Tech should initially establish its M.Arch. program in compliance with the current NAAB Conditions. An additional 15 credit hours should therefore be added to either the graduate or undergraduate portion of the proposed curriculum (or distributed across both). This could be accomplished in a number of ways:

1. Additional elective credits could be introduced at various points within the curriculum to account for some of the needed credits. This could also address the issue mentioned above regarding minimal opportunities for elective study.

2. Credits for some existing courses could be increased. In particular, credits for design studios in the existing and proposed curricula appear to undervalue the investment of effort by students and faculty. In most schools of architecture, design studios meet for approx.10-12 contact hours per week, and students normally earn 5-6 credit hours each semester for design studio work. Although Louisiana Tech's calendar is based on academic quarters, the University awards semester credit hours for all coursework. For comparison, 5-6 semester credit hours at other schools of architecture would therefore translate to 3-4 semester credit hours *per quarter* at Louisiana Tech. Architectural design studios at Louisiana Tech range from 2 to 4 credits. Credit hours for some of the design studios in the proposed curriculum could perhaps be increased to provide some of the needed credits. However, it is unlikely that these minor changes, in themselves, would be sufficient to remedy the entire 15 credit hour deficiency.

3. The School should therefore consider the possibility of requiring an additional academic quarter of study within the program. This could be accomplished without increasing the overall time to degree by instituting a required summer session, with study options possibly consisting of various special programs: on-campus coursework, such as design studios working on community service projects, or off-campus study opportunities, such as an urban design studio, a professional internship, or a study abroad program. According to the Catalog, the School of Architecture currently requires all architecture students to "acquire a minimum of 400 clock hours of architectural practice experience and/or architecture-related community service after the Foundation Level to satisfy graduation requirements." If students do not currently receive academic credit for this work, perhaps a formal mechanism could be developed in which additional credits could be conferred for these efforts during the summer.

The above list is intended to suggest some possible solutions, but it is certainly not an exhaustive set. It is likely that a combination of solutions may be the best course of action. As the faculty of the School of Architecture are in the best position to determine how to introduce additional

credits within the curriculum, I would recommend that they be charged with developing and implementing a plan to increase the total combined number of semester credit hours for the BS in Arch. Studies and the M.Arch. to 168 in order to conform with the NAAB Conditions for Accreditation (2004).

Response:

Upon receipt of notification from the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) that it had established minimum credit hour requirements for professional degree programs, the School of Architecture began to re-examine the proposed B.S. in Architectural Studies and M. Architecture curricula for means to adjust them to satisfy the NAAB requirements. As a result of the re-examination of the proposed curricula, 13 credit hours of electives were added to the proposed undergraduate curriculum through course consolidation and utilizing a maximum semester credit hour load of 12 semester credit hours per quarter for the last two years of the degree program.

The School of Architecture believes that the 13 semester credit hours of elective coursework added to the proposed undergraduate curriculum addresses the consultant's comment, and would encourage and support an undergraduate student's desire to define an area of concentration. Consequently, the School of Architecture will submit a modified or revised proposed undergraduate curriculum to the University Instructional Policies Committee upon receipt of approval for the proposed curricular revision by the Board of Regents.

Likewise, the School of Architecture believes that the 15 semester credit hours of elective coursework included in the 30 semester credit hours required to satisfy the graduate degree requirements addresses the consultant's comment, and would permit the graduate students to define an area of concentration. Additionally, the School of Architecture will seek to identify graduate courses within the University's other academic programs, and develop new graduate courses that can be used as electives to enhance a student's capability for an area of concentration.

Accordingly, the School of Architecture has developed a revised curriculum for the B.S. in Architectural Studies requiring 138 semester credit hours and a revised curriculum for the M.Architecture requiring 30 semester hours (see attached). The combined 168 semester credit hours of the two proposed degree programs will be in compliance with the 2004 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation when the degree programs are approved and initiated with the 2005 Fall Quarter. Following Board of Regents' action, the School of Architecture will submit the revised curriculum to the University's Instructional Policies Committee and to the Graduate Council, as appropriate, for approval.

Staff Note:

A copy of La Tech's revised curricula can be found in the Office of Academic Affairs.

Thesis Option, If Maintained, Will Require Additional Development

Report:

The program as proposed requires the completion of a "Comprehensive Design" project during the fifth year. The transition period between the existing program structure and the proposed revised curriculum would be an opportune time for the faculty to discuss the nature of the final year of the program. Since the Louisiana Tech Graduate School allows both "thesis" and "nonthesis"options for graduate degree programs, the faculty are free to determine how best to define the graduate portion of the proposed curriculum. But, the decision as to whether or not to require graduate students in architecture to produce a thesis should be carefully considered. Corollary questions involve defining the nature of graduate-level design research with respect to the School's specific identity and mission. If the faculty wish to require a thesis, they should establish standards and guidelines to clearly articulate the difference between the proposed graduate thesis and the typical "capstone" or "terminal" project required in many undergraduate architecture programs. Expectations for scholarly and research aspects of the thesis should also be established, along with guidelines for thesis advising and for the establishment of thesis advisory committees. Finally, since graduate thesis work often becomes a part of the permanent collection of the university library, standards for thesis documentation should be developed to ensure the quality of this lasting contribution to the body of knowledge within the discipline of architecture.

Response:

After careful review the graduate faculty of the School of Architecture has determined that it will not require the students matriculating in a first professional degree program to produce a thesis. Rather, the graduate faculty is proposing a non-thesis graduate program that requires students to produce a comprehensive project that satisfies the scope and intention of NAAB's Student Performance Criterion 12.29 – Comprehensive Design.

Admission Procedure Need Refinements

Report:

The proposal indicates that review procedures for internal applications for graduate study will be sufficiently rigorous to ensure that Louisiana Tech undergraduate students applying to the M.Arch. program are adequately prepared for graduate study. However, no mention is made in the proposal of a procedure for review of applications for graduate study from students with four-year pre-professional degrees from other architecture schools. The Louisiana Tech School of Architecture should determine if such applications will be considered, and, if so, develop a policy to determine how applicants to the one-year M.Arch. program at Louisiana Tech from four-year pre-professional degree programs in other schools of architecture would be evaluated. As curriculum structure varies widely among such pre-professional programs, and course nomenclature is not standardized, this policy should clearly outline the required prerequisite courses and associated content areas that must have been successfully completed by applicants prior to admission to the graduate program. During regular accreditation team visits, NAAB

visiting teams normally review such "transfer" policies for compliance with the Conditions for Accreditation, ensuring that all parts of a student's professional education meet NAAB standards. They also may verify that such policies have been followed by checking student records for evidence of a detailed and explicit admissions review. Further, since external applicants to the M.Arch. program may not have the same background in design as internal students, the School of Architecture may wish to consider the possibility of mandatory qualifying credits for external applicants, such as a required initial summer design studio, prior to admission to the Graduate School. This would also allow the faculty to recommend remedial summer studio coursework for internal students who have potential but who are perhaps not yet ready for graduate study.

Response:

The School of Architecture will require all students applying for admission to the proposed M. Architecture degree program to satisfy the following requirements in addition to those of Graduate School and College of Liberal Arts:

1. a minimum 3.00 GPA for the last 60 semester credit hours attempted,
2. a portfolio review by the graduate faculty, and
3. a pre-professional degree consisting of a minimum of 138 credit hours.

Additionally, applicants from other institutions offering a pre-professional degree will have their transcript evaluated by the Graduate Program Coordinator to establish the equivalency of the coursework shown on the transcript with that of the School's required coursework for the proposed B.S. in Architectural Studies degree program.

In accordance with Graduate School admission categories, the School of Architecture will admit applicants unconditionally or conditionally. Conditional admission will be utilized for those applicants needing to satisfy or validate undergraduate deficiencies, or meeting other conditions of admission. Applicants admitted conditionally could utilize the Summer Quarter prior to commencing matriculation in the M. Architecture degree program to satisfy or validate undergraduate deficiencies, or to meet other conditions for a change in status to unconditional.

Faculty Resources Are Adequate, **But Graduate Appointments Are Thin**

Report:

According to the University Catalog, only three of twelve faculty members in the School of Architecture are members of the Louisiana Tech "Graduate Faculty." This would be minimally sufficient to accommodate advising and teaching loads for required 5th year studios and courses for the approx. 20 students per year in the graduate portion of the program. In order to expand the range of graduate course offerings, especially electives, and to allow greater flexibility with regard to teaching assignments, additional faculty in the School should be encouraged to seek graduate faculty status.

The most recent NAAB Visiting Team Report (2000) indicated a concern with faculty teaching loads. These need to be assessed to ensure that faculty have sufficient time for research, scholarship, and creative work. The NAAB visiting team also expressed concern over the lack of diversity of the faculty. While the NAAB Visiting Team Report does not indicate that the existing average student/faculty ratio in the undergraduate architecture design studios at Louisiana Tech is excessive, the student/faculty ratio for graduate-level architecture design studios typically averages approx. 20% less than for undergraduate studios. The allocation of new faculty positions should be considered in the future to reduce these student/faculty ratios in the proposed graduate design studios. Should the faculty decide to move toward a 5th year thesis, additional faculty positions would also be desirable to distribute the increased teaching load imposed on the existing faculty as they serve in a more formal capacity on graduate thesis advisory committees for 5th year architecture students, compared to the previous undergraduate 5th year studio effort. While, in my judgment, the existing architecture faculty are capable of adequately establishing and serving the proposed program, as new faculty positions become available, the School of Architecture should develop a faculty hiring strategy to support and enhance the program, especially the proposed graduate portion of the program.

Response:

Existing faculty in the School of Architecture have been encouraged to seek appointment to the graduate faculty. As a result, the number of graduate faculty in the School of Architecture has increased from 3 to 8. This number represents more than 50% of the School's total FTE faculty.

The School of Architecture will utilize future faculty searches as a means for supporting and enhancing the proposed M. Architecture degree program and will request new faculty positions should the growth of the program require additional instructional resources beyond those that are currently available.

Additional Student Support/Assistantships Would Benefit Program

Report:

Merit-based and need-based scholarship opportunities should be reviewed and enhanced to support continued recruitment of qualified students. The 4-5 new graduate assistantships mentioned in the proposal will also help to retain the best students from the undergraduate portion of the proposed program and to provide some financial support for the best graduate students, allowing them to be free from the need to seek external employment during their studies. This will have a positive overall effect on the quality of graduate work. Graduate assistantships and scholarships will be very useful in ensuring that the best students from Louisiana Tech's undergraduate program are retained and continue their studies at Louisiana Tech in pursuit of the M.Arch. degree.

Response:

The School of Architecture has requested funding for four additional assistantships for the 2005-2006 academic year. One assistantship is currently funded. As the number of students in the graduate program grows, the School will request funding for additional assistantships from the University as is appropriate and consistent with other academic units within the University. Additionally, the School of Architecture will seek to pursue other sources of funding, external to the University, to establish and support additional assistantships and/or scholarships.

Library Architecture Collection Should Be Periodically Reevaluated

Report:

Information resources in the University's main library (Prescott Memorial Library), including the Architectural Archives, also appear to be adequate to support the Proposal. However, the architecture collection in the University Library should be periodically evaluated to determine if any enhancements may be needed to support graduate-level design research work.

Response:

The School of Architecture, currently, through its enrichment committee members (3 faculty and 2 students) works with the staff of Prescott Memorial Library to periodically review and assess the scope and quality of the architectural collection, and to recommend strategies for enhancing the holdings to support the School's pedagogy and scholarship. It is anticipated that this will continue as the proposed M. Architecture degree program matures over the coming years.

CONCLUSION OF THE EXTERNAL CONSULTANT

Report:

After considering all data provided as well as other relevant information, in my judgment, the proposed curriculum revision will enhance the architecture program at Louisiana Tech, allowing the program to better serve the State of Louisiana. The proposal responds to current directions within the discipline of architecture, and the faculty, facilities, and other available resources are adequate to support the proposed program. I therefore recommend that the Request for Curriculum Revision for the First Professional Degree in Architecture at Louisiana Tech University be approved with the stipulation that the School of Architecture at Louisiana Tech should develop and implement a plan to increase the total combined number of semester credit hours for the revised curriculum(BS in Arch. Studies and M.Arch.) from 153 to 168 in order to fully comply with the 2004 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The University has responded affirmatively to recommendations of the external consultant. Some corrective actions have yet to be completed, but these should be resolved quickly as part of the University's ongoing process to fulfill accreditation requirements of the NAAB.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee grant approval for the Master of Architecture (CIP Code 04.0201)and B.S. in Architectural Studies (CIP Code 04.9999) programs at Louisiana Tech University, beginning Fall, 2005. Effective this same date, the B.S. in Architecture program (CIP Code 04.0201) at the University shall be terminated.